

THE OSS REVOLT THAT FAILED

By Edward Hymoff

Illustrated by Carl Hantman

Deep behind German lines, a betrayed band of Yanks fled to glory despite the worst single defeat suffered by U.S. spies in World War II. Here's the whole story

It was time to run again. And the Americans ran—as they had been running for nearly a month. They ran from known danger into an unseen one while a monstrous November blizzard congealed their spirit as well as their exhausted bodies. The cutting edge of the north wind slashed at them as they gasped for breath in the icy, thin air of the White Carpathian Mountains bordering the Czechoslovakian provinces of Slovakia and Moravia. Wet snow hardened into ice on dirt-encrusted eyebrows and lice-ridden beards.

This was November, 1944. Allied armies had breached Hitler's Fortress Europe and even then were breaking down his 1000-year Third Reich. But in Central Europe, this encircled handful of Americans was still on the defensive, fleeing for dear life.

Their desperate flight ended in disaster. One moment there was silence broken only by the sounds of the storm; then there was the rattle of machine guns and the flat crack of rifles as the Germans ambushed them. Men toppled to the ground, dead or wounded, their arms loaded with rations instead of weapons.

Thus ended the ill-fated Dawes Mission, a World War II Office of Strategic Services operation in Czechoslovakia. It was the greatest loss suffered by the OSS in World War II. The names of the men who died as a result of it are still a secret, but the story came to light last September when four Americans in their early 40s returned to the scene of the operation to accept personally from President Novotny of Czechoslovakia a citation and medal commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Slovak uprising of 1944. These Americans had played a small but intriguing role in that uprising; they were four of the five survivors of the Dawes Mission.

If the uprising had been successful, it would have materially shortened the war, probably changed the character of postwar Eastern Europe, and certainly would have been headlined throughout the world by Associated Press war correspondent Joseph Morton, who accompanied the OSS agents behind enemy lines. Joe Morton wrote his story but it never got to press; he was captured and later executed at the Nazi concentration camp of Mauthausen. This then is the story of the OSS Revolt That Failed—how it failed and why.

By the summer of 1944, after U.S. and British armies had broken out of Normandy, the first rumblings of revolt were heard in the Carpathians. Allied strategists decided it was time to disrupt the Germans by fomenting insurrections behind the lines wherever possible. British agents parachuted into Central Europe and the United States asked Russia, who even then considered all Central Europe to be in her own sphere of influence, for permission to send American agents into Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Rumania. Finally, the Russians reluctantly agreed to permit an American "military mission" to go into German-occupied Czechoslovakia to evacuate downed U.S. fliers. This was the "official"

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Krizan-Schwartz, center, with Russians after liberation. He stuck to his "cover" as long as possible.



OSS agents confer with Slovaks in Tri Duby. Officer in middle is mission leader, Lt. Holt Green.

OSS cover story. The actuality was different.

Once Russian permission was received, Washington organized a top-secret mission to Czechoslovakia. Its original code name was Houseboat.

On September 17, 1944, three B-17s escorted by fighters took off from an airfield outside of Bari, Italy, headquarters of the 2677th OSS Regiment (also known as the Strategic Balkan Services). North of Foggia, the three Flying Fortresses joined a regularly scheduled 15th Air Force bombing mission against German positions in Czechoslovakia. As the formation flew above northwestern Slovakia, the three B-17s peeled away from the other planes, glided over the mountains one by one and touched down on a dirt airstrip at Tri Duby, seven miles south of Banska Bystrica.

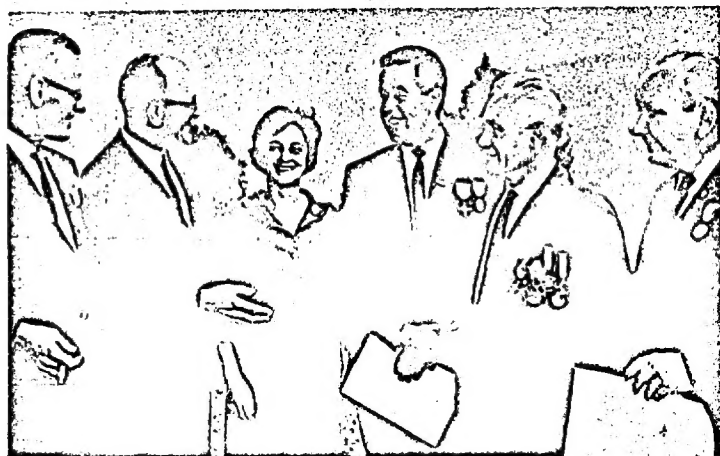
Unknown to the Americans, the Russians had been active in the area. Soviet agents had helped the Czech partisans organize, and two brigades of Slovak troops, trained and equipped by the Soviets, were flown in to support their efforts. But the Germans proved too powerful. By the time the first American agents arrived, the enemy was already closing in on Banska Bystrica to smash the uprising. As the B-17s landed, the crewmen could hear the sound of artillery fire in the distance.

The three Forts carried radios, supplies and arms for the partisans, along with a strange-looking group of Americans. As Lieutenant Holt

Green, commanding officer of the Dawes Mission, gingerly lowered himself through the forward crew hatch of one of the bombers and dropped lightly to the ground, a small group of ragged Americans surged from the crowd of Czechs who applauded this first man to step out of the planes. The Americans were flyers whose aircraft had been shot down in the area, and the bombers represented their way back to Italy and safety. They stopped short when they identified Green's uniform.

"What the hell's the Navy doing here?" one of the airmen asked. They watched curiously as another pair of legs wriggled out of the plane and dropped beside the naval officer. They belonged to a sailor wearing Army ODs, a green Navy jacket with the letters U.S.N. stenciled on its back and a white sailor's cap.

As the downed pilots crowded around this odd duo, a slim, sandy-haired "first lieutenant" lowered himself from another bomber. PFC John Schwartz, alias Lieutenant John Krizan, U.S. Army, stood for the first time in five years on the soil of his native land. Schwartz, born in Czechoslovakia, had served with the anti-Nazi underground in that country in 1939. With the Gestapo on his trail, he escaped to France, where he joined the Foreign Legion. After France fell, he found himself in a Nazi prisoner of war camp and wondered how long it would take for the Gestapo



From left: Lain, Schwartz, interpreter, McGregor, Czech official, Catlos at '64 medal award ceremony.

to uncover his history. He escaped from the POW camp and finally made it to the United States, where he joined the U.S. Army. His enlistment "for the duration and six months" made him an American citizen.

Schwartz had been selected to go to Banska Bystrica accompanied by a radio-operator; their orders were to begin gathering information immediately. Hopefully, the other members of the Dawes Mission would be airlifted home in due course, but not Krizan-Schwartz. He was there to be a spy for the United States, with orders to remain in Slovakia no matter what happened to the rest of the mission.

As quickly as possible, the B-17s were unloaded and then reloaded with as many of the downed fliers as they could take aboard. Then they set out on their return journey to Bari. In the excitement of the arrival and take-off of the bombers, Krizan-Schwartz slipped away. An hour later, disguised as a Czechoslovakian civilian, he was already at work collecting valuable information to be sent back by radio to OSS headquarters in Bari.

The first coded messages received by Bari advised that the revolt was doomed because the Red Army was not advancing fast enough from the east, and the two brigades of Russian-trained Slovaks were unable to halt superior Nazi forces that had by then encircled Banska Bystrica. The thunder of artillery fire on the other side of the



Three Flying Fortresses flew arms into and downed pilots out of Tri Duby. The Dawes Mission stayed.

mountains grew louder and Luftwaffe Stukas and Me-109 fighters began bombing and strafing the small city in which the OSS team was holed up.

OSS planners in Bari quickly agreed to strengthen the operation and also send in additional teams to penetrate Hungary, Austria and reinforce the teams in Czechoslovakia. Sergeant Steve Catlos, an American of Hungarian descent, had been preparing to parachute into Hungary with another intelligence team, when his group was alerted for a flight to Slovakia. From there he and his team would penetrate into Hungary.

Three weeks later, however, Lieutenant Holt Green radioed Bari that more downed fliers had been picked up and had to be evacuated. "DO NOT—REPEAT—NOT SEND ANY MORE MEN IN," his coded message said, "EXCEPT ANOTHER RADIO OPERATOR AND MORE SUPPLIES. ENEMY CLOSING IN."

Unfortunately, the decision was made to fly in six more B-17s loaded with supplies, arms and additional OSS agents and to fly out 60 more American fliers, including some who had escaped from German POW camps. The one-man Austrian penetration operation—an agent wearing the uniform of a U.S. Army's second lieutenant—and the Hungarian penetration team—Catlos, a lieutenant and two civilians recruited in Rome (one of them a Hungarian priest, the other a radio technician)—were added to the

flight. But there was a monumental goof in the plan: neither of the teams assigned to Hungary and Austria were given any briefing on the situation in Czechoslovakia; they were simply told to penetrate to their original targets after they landed.

Two infantry officers also went along: Captain Bill McGregor and Lieutenant Ken Lain, both on special assignment to OSS to train resistance fighters in the use of American weapons. Another unusual team flown in consisted of AP correspondent Joe Morton and a young Navy photographer sent along to film the experiences of the Americans. Morton had wrangled this choice assignment after *Life* Magazine correspondent John Phillips had gone into Yugoslavia with an OSS team assigned to Tito's partisans and scored a newsbeat as the first correspondent ever to cover the resistance from behind enemy lines.

On October 7, the betrayal of the Dawes Mission began when the six Fords landed at Tri Duby and were greeted by more than 200 people, including many with cameras, who photographed every one of the supposedly "secret" agents. Undoubtedly, Nazi spies were among the welcomers and it wasn't too long before the Gestapo received word that an American military mission had landed in German-occupied territory.

As Catlos stepped out of the B-17, he heard the rumble of artillery and machine-gun fire. Two enemy divisions, one of them a crack mountain unit, were slowly enveloping the Russian-trained brigades. The OSS teams settled in the Narodny Dom Hotel in Banska Bystrica and in a villa that was once Gestapo headquarters and immediately began collecting intelligence information. However, it was apparent that Lieutenant Green had been surprised by the arrival of the additional OSS teams. He was angry because the larger group had been sent out without the full consent or advice of the first group of agents already on the scene.

A few days after the second group of

planes landed, the Hungarian penetration team tried to communicate by radio with its contact in Hungary. They received no answering signal so the priest and the radio technician took off through enemy lines in an effort to infiltrate into their homeland. Catlos and his lieutenant remained with the larger OSS group.

A week later the long retreat began. The commander of the Czechoslovak Forces of the Interior (CFI) warned that his decimated brigades couldn't hold out much longer; he urged the Americans and some British agents from "A" Force 399 to evacuate.

Just before pulling out of Banska Bystrica, a ragtag group of 19 American airmen led by two British secret agents marched into the city with strange stories to relate. Some of the Americans had been shot down the previous month around Bratislava and, unbelievably, had been interned as POWs by the Communist-led Slovak Army of Liberation. Lieutenant Andy Schafer, a 15th Air Force fighter pilot, had been shot down on Friday, October 13. One of the British agents, wearing civilian clothing, had been mistakenly parachuted from his drop plane 120 miles from his pinpoint target—Vienna. The other agent, sentenced to death by the Gestapo, had escaped from prison.

Meanwhile, the Nazi noose around Banska Bystrica tightened. "REQUEST AERIAL RESUPPLY AND EVACUATION OF 19 ARMEN AND TWO BRITISH AGENTS," Green radioed Bari. "LANDING SITE WILL BE OPEN TWO OR THREE MORE DAYS AT MOST. URGENT." The enemy tried to jam the radio messages and, at the same time, their direction finders began pinpointing the transmitter. The OSS messages, more than 1000 in six days, also carried vital intelligence information for analysis in Bari.

For several days and nights the second group of OSS agents and the 21 airmen and British spies waited at the Tri Duby airstrip for planes to land and pick them up. But it was no go; Stukas bombed the

trails and airstrips every day.

Green was furious when he learned several weeks later that the 15th Air Force had bombed Bratislava 200 miles from where the Americans were holed up. "They could have picked up these men," he said. His anger increased when Red Air Force C-47s began flying in and out of Tri Duby, evacuating Russian officers attached to the two brigades and other important Communist underground leaders. Green contacted the Russian commander and asked about the possibility of evacuating some of his men to Soviet territory. The Russian refused.

Krizan, who was keeping an eye on the Soviet officers, noted that the Russians were willing to fly reporter Joe Morton out, although they refused to take out any of the American military people. Morton declined the offer; he chose to stay with his team.

Finally, on October 26, when it appeared certain that no help would come from Bari, Green ordered all OSS personnel to pack their gear for a trek into the mountains. Krizan wanted to remain behind and continue his espionage mission, but Green, believing that every American who spoke the Czech language would be an asset to the group, ordered him to come along. Krizan put on his uniform. The Americans felt that if they were captured in uniform the Germans could only imprison them as POWs—not execute them as spies. However, each man carried a poison capsule to be taken at his discretion in the event of capture in or out of uniform.

On October 28, the Americans reached Donevaly, a resort town about 17 miles from Banska Bystrica. Green sent what turned out to be the last message to Bari transmitted by his own radio equipment. "MOVING INTO THE MOUNTAINS. ENEMY PURSUING. THIRTY-SEVEN AMERICANS, INCLUDING AIR FORCE PERSONNEL, SPLITTING UP INTO FOUR GROUPS." He named himself as leader of one group, another officer—the one who was to have penetrated into Austria—as leader of the second group, and Lain and McGregor each to lead a group.

On November 1, rain and sleet began to fall steadily, whittling away at the health of the airmen, who were not used to the rugged life for which the OSS agents had been trained. On November 7, Krizan and a group of airmen, led by two resistance fighters, went on a patrol. The two partisans, walking about 500 feet ahead of the Americans, passed into the woods. Unknown to them, a German patrol was hiding in the timber.

When the Americans came abreast of the enemy patrol, the Germans ordered them to halt. Krizan thought fast. His wallet held 500 in greenbacks and a tiny slip of paper with a number of vital, coded radio recognition signals. Unobtrusively, he pulled his wallet from his pocket and tossed it into the underbrush. One of the German soldiers spotted the wallet and just as unobtrusively picked it up, glanced at the money and shoved it into his pocket. Krizan exhaled with relief. The soldier, he mistakenly reasoned, would keep the money and throw the wallet away.

As they were marched to the nearest headquarters, Krizan whispered to the Air Force pilot in the group that he couldn't explain his reasons, but could he claim that he was a member of the crew. "Just make sure you give me a job on your crew to fit my rank," mumbled the PFC wearing a lieutenant's bar.

"You're the bombardier," the pilot whispered.

"Do I have to know anything?" Krizan

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asked. Reluctantly, the pilot nodded. "Stille!" one of the German soldiers shouted, prodding Krizan with the muzzle of his rifle.

"Don't you have a job where I don't have to know too much?" Krizan asked a few minutes later as he deliberately stumbled against the pilot trudging in front of him.

"You're co-pilot," came the reply. Krizan had to smile.

Three days later, the captured Americans were taken to Bratislava, a Czech city on the Austrian border less than 100 miles from Vienna. The Americans underwent routine interrogation, and then were questioned individually. Standing at attention before a Wehrmacht intelligence colonel, Krizan stuck to his cover story.

"I am Lieutenant John Krizan, U.S. Army Air Force," he announced, adding his serial number.

"Krizan. That's a Slovak name, isn't it?" the colonel asked. Krizan nodded. The questions followed one after the other. Do you speak Czech? Krizan nodded yes. Where are your parents from? He explained that they had been born in the States, and that he was third generation Slovak. His answers were as short as he could make them—yes or no or sentences of two or three words. He'd fall back every few minutes on his prerogative as a POW—giving no more than name, rank and serial number. He worried that his strong Slovak accent might give him away. The Germans weren't stupid. An American with a strong accent might raise additional questions, questions that could easily lead to suspicions. They could take him for a spy, especially if word had reached Bratislava that OSS teams were operating in Czechoslovakia.

Whatever he did, Krizan knew that he had to stick to his story—that he was a co-pilot whose B-17 had been shot down on a bombing mission. He knew all of the details from the airmen he had been traveling with. If only they didn't blow his cover. His wallet was gone—and the code with it. He had his dogtags. They would suffice. After all, who could prove that he wasn't Lieutenant John Krizan? His dogtags had his cover name, his address in the Bronx, his serial number, blood type and religion. He was pleased; everything appeared to be going his way.

"So you're from the Bronx?" the colonel said. "I lived there for eighteen years. Near Fordham Road." He began talking about that borough of New York, his comments slowly taking a sharper tone. Krizan had to get him off the subject. He knew the Bronx, but he hadn't lived there long enough to pass himself off as a native. At the moment, the German was doing all the talking. But he'd almost certainly detect Krizan's accent if the OSS spy began answering questions at any length. The interrogation finally ended. Krizan was shipped to Rosaulerlandau Prison in Vienna with the other members of his "crew."

There he stayed, constantly interrogated, until one day in February, 1945, he was brought face to face with the pilot of his "crew." The officer appeared unsteady on his feet.

"I had to tell them, John," he told Krizan.

"Tell them what?" Krizan asked, alarmed.

"That you're not one of us," the pilot replied abjectly before he was led back to his cell. Then began a round of intensive interrogation for Krizan. His questioners were good: They led him on, playing cat-and-mouse with him. He

into April and he still clung to his story. They suspected that he could speak Slovak. They even spoke German to him, a language he also understood. But he said nothing but his name, rank and serial number. They learned he spoke French, but when an interpreter tested Krizan's knowledge of the language, he reported back that the prisoner "speaks with a strong American accent."

Krizan was kept with men imprisoned for political and other reasons. Some remained in the same cell with him for months; others were taken out for "interrogation" and never returned. In one

the enemy's fire. By the time the Americans reached the summit, they were blanketed by a severe blizzard. Exhausted, all of the Air Force personnel agreed to head back down and try to hide out in a village. Otherwise they planned to surrender.

Lain and McGregor, both still in fairly good physical shape, volunteered to go with the airmen and help those men who were too ill to make the descent alone. "We'll catch up with you," McGregor told Green.

It was the last time Green saw the two infantry officers. Both were captured, along with the airmen they were shepherding.

In an effort to keep warm those wintry nights in the Carpathians, the OSS agents burned the Navy photographer's film, hoping that the cellulose would burn despite the sleet that pounded down. Through the month of December, the number of OSS agents slowly dwindled as the enemy captured two men on the 7th and three more on the 10th. While heading toward one town they came across a peasant standing beside a telephone pole. It wasn't until an hour later that the weary Americans realized that the man was probably an enemy spy and that he had phoned in their location to a German command post. They abandoned their efforts to reach the town and headed up the slope of Dumbier Mountain. There they came across a partisan group. They were told that the best way to go was to follow the railroad tracks, which had been demolished by this particular group and hadn't been used in weeks. The OSS agents took this suggestion and were almost run down by an armored train filled with German troops.

"Who needs enemies with friends like these?" Catlos wisecracked. The tired men laughed, but the bitter truth had been apparent for a long time. The so-called partisan movement was more fiction than fact. The only cooperation from the resistance forces was what was paid for in gold napoleons and American greenbacks, although individual farmers occasionally did provide food and shelter. On December 15, Ken Dunlevy, Joe Morton and another officer descended to a village to forage for food. A group of partisans they met on the way reported an enemy patrol in the next valley. The OSS men had not carried any weapons; they wanted to be free to carry as much food as possible back to the group. With the help of some peasants they had enlisted in the village, the three Americans moved slowly back up the steep mountain slope beneath a heavy load of food. Above them, an enemy patrol blocked their way.

"Nemci! Nemci! Nazis! Nazis!" the frightened peasants shouted. They dropped their packs and ran just as the patrol opened fire with rifles and machine guns. The Germans cut the fleeing men down. "We were so completely surprised that we were frozen in our tracks for a few seconds," Catlos and Dunlevy later recalled in their official report. "Upon recovering, we also dashed for cover in the woods." Bullets kicked up snow around the three Americans. Morton stopped and drew a small Beretta pistol.

"I'll hold them off!" he shouted and ineffectively returned the enemy fire. But it saved Dunlevy's life. He was the last man in the line. Running through deep snow with the heavy pack on his back was next to impossible. But he plunged up the hill, somehow managed to jump over a log and then tumbled to the ground rolling over and over as bullets splattered all around him while he wriggled out of the pack harness. As

sense, Krizan was at least "safe" in enemy hands—as long as they didn't know who he really was.

For Sergeant Steve Catlos, PFC Ken Dunlevy (a radio operator), Lieutenant Ken Lain and Captain Bill McGregor, the ordeal of retaining their freedom was something else again. One by one they saw their fellow Americans drop away. Most of the airmen, ill with fever and frostbite, voluntarily surrendered to the Germans figuring that they'd be treated well. At least, as prisoners of war they'd be fed and given medical attention.

On November 10, Wehrmacht mountain troops began to pursue relentlessly the Americans, forcing them to live above the freezing timberline through the months of November, December and most of January.

The OSS agents had gold napoleons and other Czech currency with which they purchased food—and paid dearly for it. On the night of November 10, Morton's dispatch case filled with stories was stolen. A few days later they came across his small brown, dog-eared notebook beside the trail. The OSS agents wondered if one of the partisans had stolen and sold it to the Gestapo for a pardon and a reward. On November 11, Green decided that the Americans should join the remnants of the Czech brigade, which was going to try to reach Russian lines, believed to be about a week's march away. The brigade commander was determined to shoot his way through if necessary.

On November 17, the Americans had just paid for their food, which included a leg of venison, when white-clad German mountain troopers opened fire. "Let's get out of here!" Green ordered, pointing up the slope toward the summit. The Czech brigade, disorganized by the sudden attack, scattered without even setting up a defense or attempting to re-

soon as he freed himself, he got up and ran deep into the woods. The Germans finally were eluded. When the men regrouped, they discovered that they were completely lost. But then they came across tracks in the snow. Beside the tracks were dirty tobacco brown stains. They had found the way back. Dunlevy, who chewed tobacco in an effort to alleviate his hunger, had marked the route well.

When they returned to the hideout above the timberline, they were told that a group of partisans had passed by and reported how they had fought off an enemy patrol that had attacked the Americans. They found out later that the partisans had watched the enemy attack without even going to the aid of the OSS agents.

A week before Christmas, the Americans linked up with the British "Windproof" team from "A" Force 399, led by a major who had been fighting in the hills for at least six months. Windproof had been scheduled to penetrate into Hungary. Just as they finally made it, they received a coded message from one of the regular BBC news broadcasts ordering them to return to Banska Bystrica to aid the Slovak uprising. By the time they had returned, the Germans were closing in, so the British team took to the hills without waiting to join any of the local partisan groups or the remnants of the Czech brigades, as the OSS teams had done. The British still had a radio, and on December 16, Lieutenant Green contacted Bari for the last time.

The entire Dawes Mission had long since been given up for dead when Lieutenant Duranian of communications burst into the office of Colonel Chapin, intelligence director for the Central European Section.

"They're alive!" Duranian said.

"Who?" Chapin asked.

"Green and his people. We've just received a code from him. He's holed up with an 'A' Force team."

Chapin summoned Otto Jakes, a civilian OSS agent, and together they read the decoded message: "ENEMY SLOWLY CUTTING US DOWN TO SIZE. WE'RE STILL HOLDING OUT. REQUEST DROP. WE'LL KEEP FOUR SIGNAL FIRES BURNING FOR FIVE NIGHTS. NEED GUNS, FOOD AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR THIRTY." Green's message gave the coordinates for the drop. He also reported the latest military and political situation and the names of the agents who had been captured.

Unknown to Green and his men, bad weather in Bari had grounded all aircraft. The five nights passed without any of the 15th Air Force's Special Group planes showing up overhead to drop the needed supplies. The drop wasn't made until the night of December 26. By then it was too late.

At 0830 that morning, in a small hunting hut on Dumbier Mountain, Green's group, along with the British and two partisans, were captured by a Gestapo patrol disguised as Slovak peasants. The Allied agents had been betrayed to the Germans by a partisan who had been kicked out of the hut when he had tried

to seduce two women who had been working with the Americans and British.

Catlos, Dunlevy, two British intelligence agents, a Russian captain who had been with the partisans and several other resistance people hiding in an abandoned hotel higher up on the slope heard the Gestapo attack the hut below. Without waiting to find out what had happened, they cleared out just in time to escape another enemy patrol. On New Year's Day, 1945, Catlos and his group began trudging toward the east, where the Russians were reportedly advancing.

On January 15, grey snow clouds scudded across the sky and freezing mountain winds beat against the small group of exhausted men. Catlos was feverish; Dunlevy's feet were white from frostbite (he later lost a toe) and the British agents had passed the point of exhaustion. They had lost all track of time. Time and again they had escaped the German gunfire. As they moved east, the woods became sparse; tree stumps dotted the slopes because the Germans, who were digging in against the Russians, had cut timber to build bunkers.

Catlos had a severe case of dysentery. He insisted that Dunlevy and the others continue toward the front because somebody had to get out and report what had happened. In the town of Rejdova, a Czech farmer took Catlos into his home and bedded him down. The town was occupied by a German regiment. Catlos was taken for a native by a group of enemy soldiers who were camped nearby. One of the enemy soldiers, sympathizing with the American sergeant's condition, gave him two opium pills. It was the only medical treatment that Catlos received. Nine days later he hid in a haystack when the enemy turned

the town into a division headquarters.

Catlos knew he would be caught before long. "I've got to get out of here," he told the farmer who had befriended him.

The farmer rummaged around in a trunk and came up with a fur hat and a topcoat which he gave to Catlos. Taking a deep breath, Catlos walked to the barn, picked up a bale of hay and began walking toward the outskirts of the town, passing hundreds of German troops. Suddenly, he realized it would look suspicious if he walked away from the town carrying a bale of hay. He dropped it at the last house he came to and picked up an axe imbedded in a log near a woodpile.

Catlos propped the axe on his shoulder and nonchalantly began walking up the mountain slope toward the timber—like any woodcutter going about his business. For three days he remained in the forest without food or shelter while Red army artillery fire thundered closer. On January 28, Rumanian troops attached to the Soviet command found Catlos huddled beneath a tree, starving and freezing.

Meanwhile, Dunlevy and his group had made it to an abandoned iron mine on January 13. They hid in the mine, waiting for the fighting to pass them by.

Ten days later the Germans retreated and the front moved on past the mine. On January 23, the Rumanians liberated Dunlevy, two British agents, Mary Gulavich, an interpreter from the underground, a Russian captain and four partisans.

On January 29, Dunlevy was reunited with Catlos, but it wasn't until mid-March that the Russians let them return to OSS headquarters in Bari.

By the time these survivors were recuperating from their ordeal, the imprisoned Lieutenant John Krizan faced another crisis. The Gestapo had begun to suspect that he wasn't what he said he was—an aircraft crew member—although the interrogators still hadn't been able to break his cover story.

On March 23 a pair of Gestapo inquisitors finally confronted him with the evidence of his guilt—the slip of paper with the code that Krizan thought he had thrown away with his wallet. The evidence was damning.

"You're OSS!" one German said. "We know you. Your headquarters is in Bari. Your unit is the two-six-seven-seven Regiment. Your intelligence chief has an office on the fifth floor. His name is Colonel Chapin. You might as well talk. We know everything!"

Krizan was surprised, yet he kept his poise. He decided to tell the Germans what he thought was plausible—and what the Gestapo wanted to hear. He denied that he belonged to the OSS—or that he knew any Colonel Chapin—but he admitted knowing about the code slip in his wallet.

He told the Germans that he had been given the slip of paper the previous October by a British officer in the Czech mountains, and that he was supposed to pass it on to another major on another mountain. "I never met the major," Krizan admitted. "I just didn't want to get caught with this piece of paper. It looked like a code to me."

The two Gestapo agents, certain that they had finally broken the case, ordered Krizan taken back to his cell. Unknown to Krizan, his fellow agents had already been executed in Mauthausen concentration camp (after first being tortured, each one was shot in the back of the head) and the Gestapo had no way of doublechecking his story.

Krizan was saved. His underground contact in prison, an Austrian doctor, was released before Vienna fell to the Russians. The prison guard detachment tried to buy its own safety by releasing all political prisoners. In Budapest the prison guards and the Gestapo had murdered their political prisoners before retreating, but they were caught by the Red Army and hanged without trial.

The commander of Rosaulerlandau Prison didn't want to meet the same fate.

"Release us as political prisoners," Krizan suggested, "and I'll give you a letter signed by me, an American officer, that you were good to us in prison."

Soviet artillery rumbled in the distance. The prison commander needed no further urging. Krizan and two American airmen were given release papers

describing them as political prisoners, and on April 15 they were set free. Krizan holed up until Vienna was captured by the Russians. He, too, was interrogated at length by the NKVD before being returned to Bari.

On April 22, Lieutenant Lain and Captain McGregor also were released from a POW camp by the Russians, who accepted them for what they were—members of an American military mission sent into Czechoslovakia to rescue downed American airmen.

Some of Joe Morton's reports, and what was left of the film shot by the Navy photographer—along with a diary kept by one of the British agents—were given to a Czech lawyer for safekeeping in one of the towns the Americans had passed through. They were never recovered.

After V-E Day, Lieutenant Krizan, alias Corporal John Schwartz (he had been promoted), returned to Czechoslovakia with a war crimes investigations group to find out how and why American OSS agents, captured wearing U.S. Army uniforms, had been tortured and executed by the Nazis. He never discovered who had given the order to execute the agents, nor who had carried it out. However, at the Nuremberg War Crimes trial, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who had taken over the Gestapo after Heinrich Himmler had committed suicide, was charged with the atrocity.

In 1948, the surviving OSS agents were presented with the Order of the Slovak National Uprising 1st Class by the last government of a free Czechoslovakia, and the Czechoslovak War Cross of 1939. Their own government had presented them with Bronze Star Medals and a Legion of Merit.

It was a small return for the high cost of the revolt that failed. * THE END

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